

City of Seattle • Consumer Affairs Unit
Information Sheet No. 13

For-Hire Vehicles

DEFINITION. For-hire vehicles transport passengers for compensation but are not taxicabs, limousines, auto transportation company vehicles (i.e., airport shuttle vans), or several other exceptions listed at SMC 6.310.110J.

LICENSING. All for-hire vehicles that pick up passengers in Seattle must be licensed by the City of Seattle [Seattle Municipal Code (SMC), Section 6.310.130A(2)]. The City of Seattle issues for-hire vehicle licenses for King County under a Cooperative Agreement signed in 1995. Operating an unlicensed for-hire vehicle is a criminal misdemeanor. In Seattle, violations may result in monetary penalties up to \$1,000 and/or 90 days imprisonment [SMC 6.310.600]. The authority for local regulation of for-hire vehicles is contained in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) at Section 46.72.160. The maximum number of for-hire vehicle licenses available for issue are limited to 200 [SMC 6.310.500B].

VEHICLE STANDARDS. The City of Seattle has established maximum age (7 years) and minimum size (4-door, 4+ passenger) requirements for for-hire vehicles just like taxicabs [SMC 6.310.320P and R-6.310.320P]. Also, for-hire vehicles must pass a mechanical inspection by an approved ASE-certified technician and a safety inspection at the Test Station. For-hire vehicles are inspected at the Test Station annually - the same frequency as taxicabs. Nearly all of the vehicle requirements for taxicabs also apply to for-hire vehicles except that for-hire vehicles may not have taximeters or top lights and are not required to have a radio or digital security camera. A decal license will be placed in the windshield of all licensed for-hire vehicles.

VEHICLE MARKINGS. The for-hire vehicle color scheme must be different than existing taxicab or for-hire vehicle colors and must be approved by the city of Seattle [SMC 6.310.320Q]. The for-hire vehicle must have a unique 4-digit number on all four sides assigned by the Director. The trade name of the for-hire vehicle operator must be displayed on both sides of the vehicle [Rule R-6.310.200A(6)5]. A passenger information decal must be posted on the rear driver side window. In addition, a passenger information notice in Braille and raised lettering must be placed on the inside of all passenger doors [SMC 6.310.320M and Rule R-6.310.320M].

RATES. For-hire vehicles must charge for service based upon a flat rate per trip, zone fares, hourly rates (with a minimum ½-hour increment), or as provided in a written contract [SMC 6.310.530F]. All rates must be filed with the City of Seattle. Rates must be displayed in the passenger compartment of the for-hire vehicle as specified the Director [SMC 6.310.320I].

OPERATION. All trips must be 'prearranged'. Prearranged trips are paid trips by for-hire vehicles that were requested by the passengers by contacting the business offices of the for-hire vehicle operators [Rule R-6.310.110(11)]. Dispatch records, complaint logs, driver trip sheets and safety checklists must be kept. Dispatch records must include: date of trip, time of trip, name of passenger, passenger telephone number, and location. Complaint logs must include: trip date, trip time, passenger name, passenger telephone number, pick up address, complaint description, complaint resolution action. A quarterly service information reports must be submitted to the Consumer Affairs Unit per [SMC 6.310.330E]. Passengers cannot arrange trips directly with the drivers of for-hire vehicles. For-hire vehicles cannot use taxi zones, cannot cruise for passengers, and cannot park and solicit passengers. The business office dispatch must be open M-F, 9am-5pm and all other times when the for-hire vehicle is operating.

DRIVERS. Drivers of for-hire vehicles must hold valid for-hire driver licenses issued by King County Licensing (206) 296-2710. Drivers must complete safety checklists [SMC 6.310.45C], keep trip sheets [SMC 6.310.330E/460F], and issue receipts to passengers. An enlargement of the for-hire driver license must be posted on the dash board [SMC 6.310.455C].

The Consumer Affairs Unit is available to answer any questions you may have regarding for-hire vehicles. If you need assistance, please contact us at the address or telephone number below.

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